

Climate Correspondents

<https://www.climateone.org/audio/climate-correspondents>

Recorded on May 2, 2013

Greg Dalton: Welcome to Climate One, a conversation about America's energy, economy, and environment. To understand any of them, you have to understand them all. I'm Greg Dalton. Today, we look at news coverage of climate and environmental stories in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Emerging economies in those regions made tiny contributions to historic carbon pollution that is swirling around the atmosphere in stabilizing the earth's operating system. But their emissions are quickly growing and they're feeling some of the worst impacts of severe weather that is exacerbated by burning fossil fuels. Over the next hour, we'll look at the mainstream medias covering environmental and carbon stories in Brazil, China, Nigeria, and the Philippines.

Joining our live audience at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, we're pleased to have with us three journalists and a media watchdog from key developing countries. Imelda Abano is President of the Philippine Network of Environmental Journalists in the Philippines. Gustavo Faleiros is Environmental Journalist and Knight Fellow from Brazil. And Lican Liu is Water Director at Greenovation Hub in China, and Michael Simire is Deputy Editor of the Sunday Independent in Nigeria. Please welcome them to Climate One.

[Applause]

Welcome. Thank you -- thank you for coming. I'd like to start with each of you introducing yourselves and telling us a little bit about how you came to the work you're doing. Gustavo, you worked for Valor Economico, a main business paper in Brazil, and tell us how you came into the environmental beat.

Gustavo Faleiros: Well, this was back in 2001 when I started there, I was fresh out of college. So I was basically doing financial journalism and there was no many people dedicated to cover the environment, so as the junior of the newspaper, they're just saying like, "Go there and do that environmental thing." And so I was -- in the end, I felt very lucky, because I got very passionate about the issue.

So I started doing the -- the climate coverage mainly because at that time there was a lot of the discussion about the CDM, the Clean Development Mechanism, coming to Brazil but I end up dealing with forestry issue, which is greater in Brazil. Let's say the big issue for environmental coverage is deforestation, so I end up working much more with the Amazon issue, which is my main subject nowadays.

Greg Dalton: And you founded the Amazon Communications Network. Tell us about that.

Gustavo Faleiros: Yeah, well, it was a network in a sense that we felt that we needed to reach out not just journalists from Brazil but from the other countries. The Amazon Basin is shared among nine countries, so, this was in a -- in a digital -- in environmental digital news agency. It's called ((O)) Eco. So we started a project which was reaching out journalists in Guyana, Surinam, Colombia, Peru and -- and producing news in English, Spanish, and Portuguese to discuss how the Amazon is shared among -- like the resources are shared, the problems of deforestation, mining concessions. And most recently, we launched a new project which is called the Info Amazonia, which is more like a database of all the stories that were produced by this network of journalists.

Greg Dalton: Excellent. I'm sure we'll come back to the Amazon at some point during our conversation. Lican Liu, you were a television reporter and now you help educate reporters and wear lots of different hats. Tell us how you came into that.

Lican Liu: Well, I used to be a TV reporter more than ten years ago. And then after several years, I joined Greenpeace as a media officer and then campaigner. So I stepped in the circle of "Green Groups". I now work with EJN, Earth Journalism Network, as Chinese Coordinator for several small projects there. We train Chinese journalists, we organize the salons, workshops, field trips, et cetera to help -- to help Chinese journalists to get more professional.

Now we have some exchange field trip between China and the Southeast Asia countries for Chinese journalists. It actually is good thing to see that we have so many projects focusing on environment especially from my perspective in China, because everyone knows that China is facing a very severe environmental problem, not only in China, but internationally.

So I hope that in the future we can do more within China and with our international colleagues.

Greg Dalton: Thank you. Imelda Abano, you won a journalism award a few years ago and then founded a journalism network. Tell us about how you did that.

Imelda Abano: Well, I covered the environmental degradation in one of the eight Wonders of the World, the Ifugao Rice Terraces in the Philippines. And then I was covering health issues and women's issues at that time, so I wrote about environmental -- and angled it on environmental issues and it won the IUCN Asia Reuters Media Award Category, that's way back in 2002 so that started my career as an environmental journalist.

Greg Dalton: And what prompted you to -- to start the network?

Imelda Abano: Well, we started the network way back in 2003 -- 2010 with the assistance, of course, of a bigger network which is the Internews Environmental Journalism and Network. So with their assistance, we formed -- we created this Philippine Network of Environmental Journalists, which have like more than a hundred members right now and our goal is to increase the quality and quantity of environmental reporting in the Philippines, because as you know, the Philippines they -- they call us like the laboratory of natural disaster. So we have the volcanic eruption, typhoons -- we are visited by like 20 typhoons average a year -- and flooding, sea level rise, so you name it, we have it. And of course, yeah -- we -- we really have to be part of the solution, so we want to increase our tribe on environmental journalism.

Greg Dalton: We'll come back to floodings and things in the Philippines shortly. Michael Simire, you started the Environmental News Nigeria in 2012, so tell us how you came to -- to this beat in this profession.

Michael Simire: Okay, I actually studied urban planning in University. In the early 90s, I got into The Guardian newspaper. They wanted people there who studied -- to be more specialized, so this was of course exciting. We are an architect, I'm an urban planner, an estate manager, we were on the desk, we virtually initiated -- we started this Environmental Journalism Nigeria, and it grew from there. And then years later I moved to the Punch. I still -- I still have the passion for urban planning so I still continue -- uh studies over there. But for over the years, I -- I got involved in fellowships with EJN and I really --

Greg Dalton: The Environmental Journal --

Michael Simire: Environmental Journalism Network -- and fellowships and training programs.

Michael Simire: I was inspired after some time to found this Environmental Journalism Nigeria, I actually got the -- that started -- that inspired me to study this thing was -- I noticed a lot of young journalists, they had nowhere to publish these stories, they had very good stories. In Nigeria, the -- the environmental stories are not -- they're not really -- so attractive. The newspapers want to put in the politics and the business stories there. So there was a -- there were lots of stories by young journalists and I was -- I was also running a program for United Nations, the African program. So -- and to monitor young journalists so I -- I started this website and I got the stories, research about that. They -- they actually made an impact. We were encouraged to -- to put in the stories and the website also turned out to be kind of a reference point for development in Nigeria. In Nigeria we have -- we have a lot of environmental challenges. In Nigeria Delta area, the oceans and the coastal areas, the desertification areas, so many things -- soil erosion in the eastern part of the country.

So the website was very handy at a reference point as an inspiration to young journalists, as a cluster ---reference for where we can get a cluster -- number of stories from Nigeria. It was -- actually been a challenge to me and we've a lot of progress in that regard.

Greg Dalton: Well, let's talk about environmental reporting broadly. In the United States, environmental reporters are a diminishing breed and it's often thought that environmental issues are something of a luxury for people, upper middle class once you have some basic needs met, so I'd -- I'd like to ask all of you and starting with Lican about, you know, where does environmental concerns rank in China right now? We've seen the headlines about people wearing masks to jog in Beijing and that sort of things.

Lican Liu: Yeah.

Greg Dalton: Give us a broad brush about environmental concerns in China -- urban -- urban China.

Lican Liu: Well, urban China -- I mean let's take Beijing for an example. People say that Beijing is not a place for human beings to live there. You have to -- you cannot exercise, you cannot run because -- because of the bad air quality. The drinking water is a big problem. There are so many cars, we burn so many coals in North China. So -- but -- but of course, this is because -- one of the reason is that there are some many middle classes now in China compared to ten years ago, so they complained a lot about the environmental situation.

But another thing that if you look at rural China, the problem will be worst, but people don't know. There are 300 million rural Chinese cannot access to clean drinking water. Well it's more like the fourth biggest country -- in this country in terms of population in the whole world. They all living in rural China and they drink dirty water every day. I mean, the air quality should be better than it is in Beijing, but there's a lot of, you know, the so-called "environmental victims" in rural China because they have no power, no resources or knowledges to fight back against pollution, or, you know, the consequences of climate change.

So it's really broad from, you know, from top down or from the bottom up, you know, from the rural remote areas to big cities. There are so many environmental problems now. China is kind of in a stage of, you know, pre-modern, modern, post-modern, uh, so we are facing a lot of environmental problems you have faced -- or are facing now so -- it's -- it has been a challenge for -- for the Chinese leaders, for -- for ordinary people and for the Chinese media.

Greg Dalton: And do these issues get covered in the state-controlled, government-controlled media?

Lican Liu: Well, literally all media should be controlled by the government. That's by law. But they're, of course, market-oriented media now in China. China is – if you read the Chinese newspaper or you watch TV, you can see many environmental coverage everyday because there are so many issues happening every day. But there is – everyone knows there is kind of a censorship. So if some real big environmental accident happened, the Propaganda Department will issue restriction order to, you know, to the media, not allowed media to cover certain issues. But generally speaking, environmental issues are not that sensitive, so we can still report a lot.

Greg Dalton: Gustavo Faleiros, I'd like to ask you also whether the environmental concerns get broad coverage. Is there censorship or is there just sort of market neglect? They don't sell newspapers, so they're not in there.

Gustavo Faleiros: No. We're more -- I -- I believe we have a good coverage in Brazil. I -- I see newspapers and that's I think a problem of the media and TV not investing so much anymore. There was a good moment in 2007 with the climate change discussion in IPCC and I think there are some studies, which show that in Latin America, Brazil was one of the countries who have more coverage, like constant coverage and -- and -- but besides that, we do have a -- a good coverage right now of the development plans of the government in the Amazon because the energy sector now in Brazil is moving to the Amazon. It's like the last frontier, owned energy is occupying the rivers of the Amazon. So this is so controversial because they are very large projects -- that you might have heard about the Belmonte Dam which does a couple of movies by Cameron -- I forgot -- James Cameron. The -- the moviemaker went to Brazil to do the kind of a protest against the indigenous people who were being displaced or affected by the dam.

So there's good coverage on these large projects, but there's one thing that I -- that always cross my mind is that the Amazon is of course a gift to Brazil, but in terms of environmental awareness, is a curse as well, because if you go to Sao Paulo, which is the hugest city in Latin America, and you ask what is environment for to any of its developers, they'd say, "Oh, well, environment is there in the Amazon", and they don't really care about what's going on around them.

So we're good on -- on -- on defending the Amazon but not very good on -- on getting engaged on solving the -- the urban problems. I think that's the main issue right now on -- on the coverage as well. Those should have much more coverage on -- on the urban problems, waste, water management, and -- and pollution.

Greg Dalton: So environment means trees and endangered species rather than ecosystems, park, and urban issues not connected directly to their lives?

Gustavo Faleiros: Yeah.

Greg Dalton: Imelda Abano, let's ask you about whether environmental issues get coverage, whether the climate is connected to some of the floods and the severe weather that the Philippines has experienced?

Imelda Abano: Yeah. You know, by the time you step out of your house, you can see, feel environmental impacts. The water is not that clean, you know. We lack electricity supply in the rural areas, and the media coverage is not really as prestigious as the other beat like the technology sector, you know, the politics and of course, show business, especially now that we have this midterms -- midterm elections in May. So, it's -- it's -- we're -- we are -- the coverage is improving but the improvement is very slow.

Greg Dalton: But it's not the best career path for a journalist is what you're saying. If you want to

make it to the top as a journalist, you don't pick environment.

Imelda Abano: Right.

Greg Dalton: You pick celebrity or -- or -- or tech or something else. Michael Simire, Nigeria -- huge energy producer, oil-exporting country, I would think that environment would be a pretty big issue there, flaring, and everything else, is that true?

Michael Simire: Yes, it is a big problem. The Nigeria Delta area very notorious, a lot of pollution virtually every day, there's one spill or the other. The gas associated is flared. We have this very active civil society organizations and they actually carry the press along very well. And it has actually made our job very exciting. We -- we keen to development, we have no option, because it's a major disaster area in that part of the country. And we -- we've been following it regularly and the government acts like it doesn't matters, they keep on shifting the dates to stop the flare-outs and anytime there are spills, the state-run media don't tell all the truths, so it's not... -- the private media to go down there and see the way it is, what is actually on the ground.

Greg Dalton: Let's talk about climate impact in your countries. I mean some of the developing countries have experience in some of the most severe climate impacts and perhaps we can start with Imelda. You know, floods in the Philippines, pretty epic floods, you're -- you're getting a lot of unwanted water at least not in the times that you're used to getting it. So tell us about the climate impacts and floods.

Imelda Abano: Well, last year -- just last year, while we have this United Nations Climate Change Conference, we were like submerged by a lot of flooding and then the -- the policy makers or the government doesn't care about us anymore. Because we are literally sinking, you know. And of course, the other small islands also. And it's really -- it's -- it's really disgusting for us journalists covering environmental issues if the government itself doesn't care about it.

Greg Dalton: So there's floods and they're not responding and providing aid to - to victims of the floods?

Imelda Abano: Right. But right now, well, the government at least is concentrating on implementing laws on urban planning at least.

Greg Dalton: Lican, let's ask you. There's also been floods in -- in China. We've talked a little bit about the air pollution, what other climate impacts is China wrestling with?

Lican Liu: Well, I mean the media coverage on climate change is not really good in China, in fact, after 2009, after the Copenhagen Conference, but when there is no extreme weather event happened, people tend to say that it is because of climate change. You know, even my mother sometimes if -- if the winter is too cold or too warm, she will say that, "Oh, climate is changing." I mean, that's -- that's -- that's about ordinary life but surely, because China is a country where a lot of floods happen every day and the drought happens every year, not every day. So people tend to thinks it's -- it's as a natural thing. You know, we don't really think it -- it is highly related about or related to climate change.

So it's hard to you know, to -- to tell people that, you know, climate change is -- is just there.

Greg Dalton: Are there climate -- hardcore climate change deniers like there are in Washington DC? I mean they're a special breed.

Lican Liu: Yeah, I believe so. I believe so. Maybe not in the environment but, ordinary people, you

know, they just don't -- the thing is too far away, I mean it's not an urban thing.

Greg Dalton: So it's the opposite of here. Gustavo, you have hardcore climate change deniers who think it's a conspiracy or made up?

Gustavo Faleiros: Well, there are some, but I -- I think in Brazil, they are not so strong, I mean like it was -- even on -- a subject of a study by the Reuters Institute of Journalism in Oxford. They tried to map skeptics in developing countries and it seems that Brazil has not very loud ones. We get -- we have very good scientists on -- on -- on climate issues and that's why I think they're getting much more attention and -- and these scientists are specifically showing the impacts of -- of climate on -- on the Amazon on the -- which you might have heard about, the savannization of the Amazon. The Amazon becoming a savannah but more dry than the conditions, which allows it to be rainforest.

So the fact is in ten years, we had two droughts that never happened in 50 years before. It was 2005 and 2010. And they're saying it's gonna happen this year again, so if it happens this year again, it means like you have three record droughts in -- in less than ten years which used to happen in our historical background. So there's a lot of attention on this thing.

Same thing with floods or landslides, mudslides on -- on the coast of Rio. The coast of Rio is known by being very beautiful, because it's very dramatic, but it's very steepy, and a lot of people living there, maybe they shouldn't. The fact is like there's historical rains creating a lot of deaths and -- and there was 1,800 people dead three years ago because of major rain which also was considered historic. So --

Greg Dalton: But on the Amazon, some people think the Amazon is a -- is a relatively positive story that it's at risk, but Brazil has done a fairly good job -- I'd like to hear your view on addressing the risk and -- and slowing the incursion of farmland and cattle grazing, that sort of thing, that it's at least a somewhat positive story of -- of recognizing a risk and managing it. Is that accurate?

Gustavo Faleiros: It's true. It's true that there was a -- a major improvement on -- on combating the deforestation and for the last six years, the -- deforestation was literally cut by half, and this is happening in Brazil and -- but I -- I don't think this should put people in an glorious mood because there is a lot of things happening linked to Brazil, which is for example, roads that are being built to connect Brazil to Peru, driving much more gold mining.

There's another problem which is -- we are discussing now, is it possible to get a -- a net zero deforestation, which means like you allow some areas to regrow and you still have some kind of legal deforestation, because as you might have heard, many parts of the Amazon doesn't have a very good soil, so you need to burn some or you need to cut some trees to get the -- the production going on.

So you need to have some legal deforestation. But is it possible to have a zero net deforestation?

We're kind of far from this, so you have a lot of small deforestation going on, you don't have more like this large thing that you would say in the 80's and the 90's like those images that were shocking the world. But you still have like very small patches being destroyed everyday and how do you deal with this, these small farmers that don't have any type of support. So it's -- it's a big challenge here.

Greg Dalton: So the -- the pace of destruction is slowing but not stopped.

Gustavo Faleiros: No, they're not.

Greg Dalton: Those joining us -- those joining us on the radio, Gustavo Faleiros is an Environmental Journalist and Knight Fellow from Brazil. Other guests at Climate One today are Imelda Abano, President of the Philippine Network of Environmental Journalists, Lican Liu is Water

Director at the Greenovation Hub in China, and Michael Simire is Deputy Editor of the Sunday Independent in Nigeria. I'm Greg Dalton.

Let's talk a little bit about the food energy and food water tension 'cause that can be a big environmental issue as middle classes emerge. There's a desire for pro-animal protein diets and that can create both water stress and environmental stress. So who would like to address that and some -- some of your coverage? Michael, I know that the farmers in Nigeria, that's a big issue for them, wrestling with water scarcity already.

Michael Simire: Yeah, yeah. And the -- the climate's situation -- climate changes making things very worst and they -- they are faced with the challenge of how to adjust the planting season, something like that. And the -- the media is something of, you know, recent years and I -- most of my reports have actually focused on adaptation and --

Greg Dalton: Dealing with the impacts of climate change.

Michael Simire: ... impacts of climate change would then become -- make changes, know what to do, how to adjust, you know, and to still be relevant in their work.

Greg Dalton: And Imelda Abano, let's ask you how the food tension is playing out in -- in the Philippines with the severe weather and -- and climate impact.

Imelda Abano: Yeah, I have interviewed a lot of farmers already and they don't know about climate change, but they do know that the cycle of farming is -- it's -- it's very different now compared before so I think the impact there is that where the food supply is getting scarce and scarce with like, for example, in the Philippines, only we have like 95 -- more than 95 million population. It's really hard for them to produce more with this kind of extreme and erratic weather.

Greg Dalton: Is that affecting food prices?

Imelda Abano: Yes, of course.

Greg Dalton: So -- and does that affect the political stability? Maybe we can get Lican. We're just concerned about rising food prices, instability in China, that's got to be something on the leadership's mind.

Lican Liu: I'm sorry, what?

Greg Dalton: Rising food prices --

Lican Liu: Okay.

Greg Dalton: ... are related to weather -- severe weather, food supply --

Lican Liu: Yeah.

Greg Dalton: ... and political stability.

Lican Liu: And you know what, we -- we import a lot of corns or soy beans from the States so -- so I mean -- because -- because it -- it is cheaper than producing it in China and we buy a lot of lands in Africa now to -- to develop agriculture. We -- you know, we have to grow rice there, we raise poultries and pigs, you know, cows there to make milk, to make meat.

But -- but they're saying that it is the food shortage is not a big issue, or not a big concern for many Chinese. Instead, it is the food safety. It's -- it's so unsafe that we buy -- we -- we want to buy everything, you know, abroad if we have the chance. So it's really a -- I mean it -- it caused a problem in Hong Kong and in some other countries right now because of the infant milk and powder or something like that. So, you know --

Greg Dalton: Deliberately tainted with chemicals, right?

Lican Liu: Yeah, yeah. We -- we got scared because of the food safety issue because of the pollution or something.

Greg Dalton: And in Hong Kong and Beijing, you see -- you start to see a little bit of organic food developing and some kind of awareness of the connection about getting things closer with things that are good --

Lican Liu: Yeah.

Greg Dalton: ... good for the personal health as well --

Lican Liu: Yeah.

Greg Dalton: ... as environmental health. Let's talk about that. Is that something that's obviously - it's a premium in the United States, it was considered a luxury by many people. What's it like in a developing country like China, Brazil, and the others?

Lican Liu: Well, it's still luxury. I mean only in upper middle class can afford the price of those organic foods. You know, it's not for everybody in China.

Lican Liu: So, it's just -- it's still developing more and more middle class in China. Now, we're seeing those kind of food around their cities but they can -- they cannot so many good soil for them because many percentage of the soil have been contaminated. So it's very hard, you know, for many ordinary Chinese to -- to get those safe food.

Greg Dalton: And the idea of eating imported refrigerated produce in China that comes from California, not so good from a climate perspective, carbon perspective. Gustavo, let's talk, get you in on the food on Brazil and the organic food, whether that's part of the emerging awareness.

Gustavo Faleiros: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's -- it's a part of -- it's a big trend in -- in Rio or in Sao Paulo. And I think it's -- it's gonna be more and more because I think it's gonna be as a local production because you have to remember that Brazil is one of the countries which is more linked to the -- the word "trade" of food. So sometimes, your sugar just doubled the price and you don't know why and just because they decided to export more sugar than sell inside of the country, and this applies for many things, like meat because then the soy bean price went up and it affects the whole - the whole market. So I -- I being experienced myself in Sao Paulo, that's getting much more affordable to buy organic food or local production than going to a -- a major supermarket chain.

Greg Dalton: You mentioned sugar. Obviously a lot of people associate sugar with ethanol in Brazil and actually people can actually dial I believe at the pumps, you can actually --

Gustavo Faleiros: Yeah.

Greg Dalton: ...blend your fuel in terms of how much ethanol, how much gasoline? But you have some concerns about that biofuels have softened recently because of electric vehicle. Let's talk

about that.

Gustavo Faleiros: Yeah, that's -- that's the main thing. I mean nobody could imagine when -- President George W. Bush went to Brazil in 2008 that the ethanol in Brazil would suffer such backdrop, I mean, like it's not happening the way people are imagining -- that we are imagining that we were be supplying, exporting ethanol all over the world and just not happening. Even the supply inside is -- is going down. And it's surprising because they started producing these cars in large quantities. Most of the cars now that are sold in Brazil are double-fuel but the supply of -- of ethanol is just very unreliable because if the price of sugar is high, so that does ethanol does the sugar as well is much -- it's much better to sell sugar than sell ethanol.

So it's a complicated issue. The government -- the current government has to be blamed by what I've seen because they're being controlled in the price of gasoline so the gasoline is cheaper as well than buying ethanol and -- by comparable terms like efficiency for the car in terms of economics. So nobody would imagine that the -- a sector like the ethanol sector would suffer such a backstab so soon.

Greg Dalton: So the government, if I heard you correctly, is keeping the price of gasoline while allowing the price of sugar to go up?

Gustavo Faleiros: Yeah, well, the price of sugar is market price. And -- and the gasoline price is controlled by Petrobras, which is the state-owned oil company.

Greg Dalton: Yeah, yeah.

Gustavo Faleiros: And -- and the government who control the inflation because inflation is the major political issue in Brazil and you might have seen now that we -- almost there, almost not -- big inflation as in the 80s but almost getting these tensions that -- that is gonna hinder the political power. So inflation is the thing and government tends to control gasoline to -- to control inflation. So once you control gasoline, you're allowing people to buy more gasoline, which creates more pollution -- and hinders the ethanol sector. It's just crazy.

Greg Dalton: Gustavo Faleiros is an Environmental Journalist from Brazil. Lican Liu, let's get you on the price of gasoline in China. Is that something also what government keeps low for political stability, which facilitates a family car for the emerging Chinese middle class?

Lican Liu: Well, I don't think the price of gasoline in China is low compared to it is in America.

Greg Dalton: That's in our constitution...so --

Lican Liu: Well, it is controlled by the government but the price is more market because it -- it compares to the price in Europe and the America and other countries. It pretty much -- not that high and not that low so it's -- it's okay, but middle class always complain about the -- the rise of the price because it's just a rise step by step in recent years.

But people seem to -- have no choice. They -- they should buy a car because they don't want to, you know, to be squeezed in the -- in a bus or you know, subway. They -- they can afford the gasoline so it's not -- people tend not to think it's a problem of climate change or pollution. People just think it is something that we have to do -- we have to buy and we have to afford.

Greg Dalton: This gets to a key issue of -- of equity among -- between developed countries and -- and developing countries. Gustavo, do you believe that, you know, or anyone, that the people in emerging company -- countries have the equal right to the kind of development and lifestyle that

people here in the West enjoy and that -- should -- can't and shouldn't be denying that so it's actually a moral issue?

Gustavo Faleiros: Yeah, yeah. You know, the right of developing, it's not in question. I mean everybody wants to have a nice life and I think we're getting there, it's -- it's really -- it's really interesting to see how the country has -- I was born in the 70's, I'm getting older, if I may say, so I -- I -- I lived the 80's with the hyper-inflation time. It was totally different, like a much better country now, there's no doubt about it. But it can be done different. So what I -- I -- which makes me sad is seeing sometimes that the political discussion doesn't get to the point of an alternative development. I'm not saying that we should stay living in huts, nothing like that. I'm just saying like it has to be a way, a different way and we are the ones who has to propose this, Brazil, more than any other country because the Amazon is the largest place, the rainforest in the world, the biodiversity and everything. We have to propose something alternative.

So it's not that we're going to develop or I propose no development, but it has to be done in a different way.

Greg Dalton: Imelda Abano, you have covered the UN Climate Negotiations and this issue of clean development and -- and technology and money transfers to developing countries is a big issue in those climate talks. Let's have your thoughts on this equity issue about developing companies -- countries' right to have equal access to -- to develop cleanly.

Imelda Abano: Right. The developing countries are asking for a technology transfer to the -- for the developed countries. And I would -- I think it's the responsibility of the developed countries to -- of course, share their knowledge and share some technology to the poorer countries, so they can also move on and rise.

Greg Dalton: As well as financial transfers but American taxpayers aren't too willing to send money overseas with that kind of stuff and no individual company says, well, they're take money out of their pocket to do that. That's the tough part.

Imelda Abano: Right. I don't blame -- I don't blame the big companies or corporations or the -- the non-profit organizations, but yes, it's -- it's really a tough question and a tough topic for us also.

Greg Dalton: Michael, any thoughts on that? I mean a lot of the pollution is destabilizing the continent. I have people here who said it's red, white, and blue, which means it's American and Russian, and French. But let's hear your thoughts on that -- on that equity issue and in terms of developed countries created a problem and now there's a tough block for developing nations.

Michael Simire: Yeah. I think developed nations need to take -- developed nations need to address responsibility to address this issue. Nevertheless, I think developing nations should-- you know, should not just sit back and expect money to come. They need to do -- they need to develop, find a way of generating money to address these issues locally. What developed nations have their issues as well, you can't depend on that fully.

And then it reminds me of a topic in Nigeria, a developing mechanism. The school of thoughts, I'll use that term, if very -- very -- you know, very -- it's very ongoing now, that's one of the areas that Nigeria -- CDM development mechanism is to --

Greg Dalton: Which we should that to United Nations Program --

Michael Simire: Program.

Greg Dalton: ... Funding Project --

Michael Simire: ... oh, yeah, Funding Project. We -- we the project is about -- we -- we -- we try to stop gas flaring so one of the project is to -- to now the -- the gas, you know, capture to generate power to local communities. But a particular group is saying that ordinary Nigerians should have stopped this very long ago. Why are you now using the CDM issue issue to address this issue you're trying to make money which you have done before. So it's -- it's -- it's very controversial in Nigeria, all these issues.

Greg Dalton: If you're just joining us, Michael Simire is Deputy Editor of the Sunday Independent in Nigeria. I'm Greg Dalton.

Let's talk about clean technology and then in a few minutes, we're gonna bring in our audience. But let's talk about flipside of this. We've been talking a lot about brown energy and the other impacts. Clean technology, renewable technologies, there's some promise. Certainly, we talked a little bit about biofuels in Brazil. Lican, often people think that China has a big lead on batteries and solar industry so, but there's been some bumps lately but it's not -- so tell us about your coverage or your thoughts on clean tech in China which --

Lican Liu: Well, have you ever heard that the largest, the biggest Chinese solar energy company just bankrupt. So --

Greg Dalton: Suntech was which?

Lican Liu: Yeah.

Greg Dalton: It went bankrupt.

Lican Liu: Yeah. People think that it may signal that, you know, how tough the clean technology market is -- we -- we produce a lot of so-called the clean technology products, but we use only some of them and then we export a really large part of the products to Europe, United States maybe. So I don't think -- I mean China is trying to do more in terms of renewable technology or energy development, but the thing that China still lags behind in terms of science, technology, and other stuff, so it is big challenge for business persons in China and for Chinese leaders to, you know, to really -- to do what they want to do in terms of clean technology.

Greg Dalton: Imelda -- Imelda Abano, is there a clean tech sector in the Philippines?

Imelda Abano: Yeah, but we have not reached that clean technology boom yet because first of all, they're concentrated on poverty issues -- putting food first into the mouths of the people there than buying very expensive solar panels like that. But we are -- yeah, we are improving with this small hydro-project, wind energy projects also.

Greg Dalton: Michael Simire, does any money from oil exports go to clean energy in Nigeria?

Michael Simire: Yeah. We are looking at it -- because we have a lot of energy challenges, pollution, trying to control the pollution from energy and there is a lot of projects going on and there's the -- the solar energy and several to -- to harness this potential and we are really looking at several proposals in Nigeria.

Greg Dalton: We're talking about news coverage of environmental and climate issues in Brazil, Philippines, Nigeria, and China. You are listening to Climate One.

Let's talk about population. People look at the growth of population to nine billion and a lot of environmentalists don't like to talk about population, but that's one of the biggest levers driving increased consumption, resource extraction, stress overshoots, there's lots of words for these things. Is that part of the environmental conversation? I mean China got population under control through some very strong measures, you know, that has its own set of issues. But Lican Liu, let's talk about is population connected at all to the environmental stress issues?

Lican Liu: Of course. I mean if you derive those problems with population, you can see that the average thing in environmental problem is not that big, but if you put it together, it's a really big thing in China and it will affect other countries.

The thing that -- now within China where -- discussing, whether we should end the one-child policy now -- not because of environmental concerns but because we think that we -- we have, you know, to make these policy for two decades, more than two decades, so China is getting older before it gets richer. So it maybe a time for a discussion of -- of -- the -- the end of this policy, but we still -- we're still in the air somewhere. People tend to not think -- think a lot about population and with environmental issues. But of course, it is highly related population.

Greg Dalton: So a lot of the models of nine billion people that could change, if China changes the one-child policy that nine could become -- that could have some real serious problems impacts of that.

Let's invite your participation. We'll put the microphone here if you're on this side of the audience, please go back through that door, the line begins with our producer Jane Ann there. And we invite you to join us for one -- one part. Comment or question and we'll get you in the part of the conversation.

Let's go to audience questions. Welcome to Climate One. Yes, sir?

Male Audience: Alright. My name is David Arcano, I have a question to all the panelists. Would you just share your thoughts a little bit with respect to the challenges of that you have covering all these sets of issues that you have talked about? And the world is right now, the critical conjunction where by the next two years, we're gonna be switching from the MDGs probably to the sustainable development goals, what is it that media needs to do to be able to up its game and be able to participate in making sure that it's actually playing its as it moves on to post-2015? Thank you.

Greg Dalton: MDG, the Millennium Development Goals. Who'd like to tell -- Michael?

Michael Simire: I think the media should focus not only on the problems but also we find a way of parts of the solution. I think that is vital in this regard. That's my contribution.

Greg Dalton: Gustavo Faleiros?

Gustavo Faleiros: First, I think one of the challenge of this coverage is that these are the longer terms commitment or longer term results. So it's very difficult to -- to actually create a momentum in the newspaper or with your editor, with your audience but this subjects are actually important. So -- and tell the story of something that's gonna be reached in 50 years and so that's I see one of the main -- main challenges is really to tell a good story with such kind of a vague target sometimes.

Greg Dalton: And there are a lot processed stories. In the UN process is complicated as to how and that's just -- it's very tough to make that -- those compelling stories. Let's have our next audience question. Welcome to Climate One.

Male Audience: Thank you all for coming and sharing your opinions and insights with us tonight. I wanted to know in terms of international negotiations. We've always seen the cultural differences about how the climate is conceived play a major role and how different countries interact with the climate issue and end up having conversations about in the U.S. for example, I know, that it's slightly linked to economic burden or such.

What I wanted to know is for limiting those misunderstandings, what would you think internationally is the least-recognized cultural or conceptual framework of the climate issue in your countries that the rest of the world doesn't conceive of? Is it rural issues, is it something you do with particular subsection of the environment like in the Amazon? How does the climate get framed in your countries that the rest of the world doesn't recognize part of your leader's calculus?

Greg Dalton: So how is the climate frame in your country that might be different from somewhere else? Gustavo Faleiros?

Gustavo Faleiros: Yeah. I would -- I would say that it's mainly that -- the issue that you can have a big region in the country just drying out and I don't think people might -- understand what does it mean and I -- I'll tell you how this would affect and it's not just because we would lose immense biodiversity, but you end up changing the whole climate system of the region, maybe of the world, and that was just one specific example here which is -- was very funny.

A few years ago, there's a major drought in Argentina. And so soybean production, corn production really, really bad. And one day, the Floren newspapers with big headlines, it's like it's Brazil's fault. And there was a great story. It was just explaining the science behind the -- the -- the rains of the region, which is like you have a blow coming from the Atlantic pushing the moisture from Amazon into Andes, which comes down to the -- to Argentina and rains in that region. So because of deforestation, these rains are diminishing. So I think that's something that is not being totally understood.

Greg Dalton: Michael Simire, you also have thoughts about resource conflicts in wars that are climate-related in Africa.

Michael Simire: Yeah. So we -- you know, it's a very topical issue in Nigeria right now. We have this popular lake within the _____. It's called Lake Chad. It's actually shared by about four countries, Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, Mali, several countries are... over the years the lake has really shrunk considerably, attributed to climate changes and several issues. A lot of -- people depend on -- on this lake, the agriculture, the pasture and all that. We saying that there was a discussion that linked these developments to terrorism. We have this big problem in Nigeria now called Boko Haram, it's a kind of group that is against the western education and bombing and all these things. So there was a research... a lot of youths that were engaged. Their living was tied to the lake -- and become very idle you know, this -- this group. And oh, the scenario, is nomadic that they move around, they don't have -- they don't stay and they give us a the grazing grounds are disappearing so they move closer to farmlands and they can become very aggressive when they from feeding. So this is a major area that is affecting, you know, climate change and development, agriculture and all that. It's a big problem.

Greg Dalton: There's a movie out there called Climate Refugees. There's also a book out there called Climate Wars, if you'd like to look into more of either of those. Let's have our next question. Welcome.

Male Audience: Yes. This is a question regarding China and Africa. There is a significant amount of poaching going on in Africa for horns from rhinoceros and elephants to go to markets in China

and Vietnam. What role has the Chinese media played in helping to expose this problem and potentially combat it?

Lican Liu: I don't see -- I don't see much coverage out in China's investment on Chinese media but it is becoming -- becoming more but still not like you know, resources -- sources, the news, Chinese media cannot cover such stories because it's not that -- I mean, suppose that there's a story about China's investment or its relationship with Africa, its audience doesn't care too much so it's very hard for -- for Chinese media to report a lot about the China - Africa market issues.

Greg Dalton: Let's have our next audience question. Welcome.

Female Audience: Hi. Yeah, I'm just wondering kind of from all of you what makes the most compelling environmental story that you've told. So maybe you could each give an example of the story that you've told that you were surprised by how much attention it got and you know, what makes the most compelling story to people that feel disconnected, Lican, like you're saying, from environmental issues?

Greg Dalton: Great question. So the impact. Your favorite story. Gustavo Faleiros?

Gustavo Faleiros: Yeah. Well I have one specific story which relates with one specific species, it's very conservation story. We have this spix macaw in Brazil. Do you know the movie Rio, that macaw is a spix macaw. But the Rio just placed it in the totally wrong place. She never lived in Rio -- I said she because we use a woman's name for it. She lives at the dry shrub area of Brazil, but is extinct in nature because of traffic. But now there's a lot of effort to -- to bring it back and this effort is done by the sheik in Qatar. So I went to Qatar to see where this guy -- just because what people think but I'm -- I'm not saying this, is that the guy actually had bought the birds for fun many years ago but because of the sites which is the law for not trafficking animals, he started breeding the birds. And now he's the most successful breeder all around the world and I think he has more -- almost a hundred birds.

And then he committed himself to bring the birds back to Brazil. He bought a whole area of the land to -- to put the -- the birds back and so when I found out this story, I was like that's an amazing story and I told and I got so many response from people. Some say it's beautiful that we might have these species back in -- in the wild but -- but some say like this is crazy sheik wants with us because why he has all our birds. So it was an amazing response.

Greg Dalton: Lican Liu, a story with impact.

Lican Liu: Well, I have a story about one of the EJM fellows several years ago. He went to a city in middle China where there are many polluting companies there, but the deputy mayor told him that there's no any pollution around this area. But of course he found the truth and he reported it.

After -- right after he reported the pollution there in the city the deputy mayor was fired. You can see the immediate effect from -- from media coverage, even in China. It's -- I mean, you can find many good stories every month in China about environment issues. Believe me, China is now the gold mine of environmental stories. It is a lot every day.

Greg Dalton: And there's actual -- a lot of protests in civil disobedience. You can't protest, but you can walk around places, right?

Lican Liu: Yeah. Legally we cannot demonstrate. We can by constitution but we cannot. So yeah. So the -- the urban middle class invented a like walk around building, walk around a government building, something like that. We wear masks to complain about air quality. It's okay, I mean, the

police is also breathing the dirty air, so they will not do something about it. So, it's okay to -- to do something like that so media, if there's no restriction order from the propaganda department, yet, media tend to cover those kind of a protest as soon as possible. So you can see those -- protest -- environmental protest in many parts of China in recent years, starting on urban areas. There are a lot.

Greg Dalton: Imelda Abano, a story that had impact that's very memorable for you.

Imelda Abano: I remember in 2009, I did a story about a fisherman. I was in a holiday, actually. Well, while I was walking along the beach, I saw those fishermen coming to the shore and then catch nothing but a little fish like this -- little fishes. So I just asked them, just for curiosity, and then I did a story on the impacts of -- of not getting much catch and then actually, the -- the story was linked on environmental issues and climate change, like that.

So the story actually won the Asia -- won me as Asian Journalist of the Year and then the impact of that is that the local government created a job for the fishermen and of course the -- their wives, for some livelihood in the community.

Greg Dalton: So they're no longer fishermen but .

[Applause]

Greg Dalton: Michael Simire?

Michael Simire: Okay. This -- I remember this story -- I don't -- I don't know if I could remember the impact but it's very interesting. We had this in Nigeria, it was time. And somebody told me about a farming community outside of Lagos. I went there, I spoke to this set of farmers, they told me the challenges, there's no the ones they've planted have not been able to start growing. The planters -- they can't plant again because the rains have not come. Very good article -- I was -- I was about to write the article when -- a few -- a few days later, they the rain came to Lagos... it rained all day, all through the day and it just occurred to me. Why don't you go back to -- to this farming community. I went there.

Michael Simire: ...The story was had I entirely if the -- the it was flooded, because he was forced to move to a swampy land when there was drought 'cause there was no -- now, everywhere was flooded. They lost everything so I -- I then -- I got hold of another woman, a single mother, she put all her life savings into this project called job for job for rice program by the Lagos government.

There was no rain. She lost about 300,000 naira from I went to her. She had gotten a stay somewhere. Then, the somewhere. The rain came on, there was a serious mudslide that virtually covered the house. So now I called this story, Coping with Two Extremes. The first scenario was no rain, and the second one when there was too much rain. It turned out to be a very interesting article.

Greg Dalton: And telling of the kind of extremes, we're gonna see what's too much and too little and same measure, similar measures. Let's have our next question. Welcome.

Female Audience: Hi. Thank you all for this discussion. As you are probably aware, in the United States, the fossil fuel industry is very politically powerful and has had a huge influence on policy in the United States, most of which is has not been very good. I was wondering especially for Nigeria and Brazil, how -- how does your countries interacted with the multinational oil companies.

I know Brazil there was just some big incident with an international company over a spill and what

not, and Nigeria, I'm assuming most of -- a lot of your oil is -- is being drilled by international companies. I was wondering how do they influence your politics and your economy in your countries?

Gustavo Faleiros: I think they're -- they're getting more and more influenced. The -- the episode that you mentioned, it was the oil spill of Chevron, which was the largest oil spill we had so far in -- in Brazil. And I think it harmed a little bit the reputation of international companies, which are just getting to Brazil right now. They're there for long, but getting big time for the -- the underwater, the off-shore exploitation, but not enough so there's so a lot going on. Actually we have to see what is coming because it's a very, very unique operation. We're talking about exploiting oil seven kilometers down the Earth. Like after you've reached the -- the seabed, still you'll go more seven kilometers and this is 200 kilometers from the coast.

So you're creating a whole new operation. It's not helicopters because helicopters cannot fly 200 kilometers so we're creating these bases off where they're gonna fly helicopters and taking boats.

So you see how much room for something going wrong exists on this operation. So -- and this is -- cannot be done without international companies. Petrobras, the company cannot do it by themselves, so they partnered with BP, Chevron, all the big guys for doing this. So, that's it.

Greg Dalton: Michael Simire?

Michael Simire: So they are very vital in Nigerian companies. major economies basically depends on oil, crude oil, petroleum and the big oil friends are there of course, Shell, Chevron. Of course there should be the policies, the government which tend to get all these crude oil but the -- the downside of it is the pollution issue. There's a lot of spills -- spillage, there's still flaring of gas. That is just the downside of it and we are not still refining the crude oil, we take it out of the country and bring it back and it's now very expensive petrol. So that -- that's the issue. It's -- we -- we -- it's vital for the Nigerian economy, but there's a lot of pollution going on.

Greg Dalton: Are you saying you'd rather have it refined in the country? Because that would be dirty refineries in your country.

Michael Simire: Well, it would be cheaper and then politics and whatever are not going to work somehow.

Greg Dalton: Let's have our last audience question. Welcome.

Female Audience: I'm actually just following up on that question. You all live in countries where oil companies, foreign oil companies produce oil and natural gas for operations. And I'm actually curious as to the impact of foreign oil corporations potentially on your reporting. Do you face challenges in trying to report on those companies and their activities?

Michael Simire: I am --

Greg Dalton: Michael?

Michael Simire: A good example -- uhm -- we -- I talked about the CDM projects earlier...

Greg Dalton: Clean Development Mechanism.

Michael Simire: Clean Development Mechanism project earlier. We -- one of two oil companies -- I involved in one of them to gas capture on the gas that is usually flared is now be captured and used

to generate some power to local communities. Some time ago, we decided -- ok let's decide what is happening because officially they are providing electricity and --

Greg Dalton: Climate change --

Michael Simire: Climate Change Convention. We -- okay, we said okay, let's go and look at what is really happening. Officially they are -- they are approved CDM projects and they are doing these things. We sent several letters of request, we never got any -- we sent them last year -- we have not gotten any -- we made several moves -- we would not really make an impact. That is a very good example of ____.

Greg Dalton: Other examples of sort of pressure on -- on news coverage? yeah, anyone else? Gustavo Faleiros?

Gustavo Faleiros: No, no. Not personally. I -- I think that the Chevron episode in Brazil, it was quite complicated, there was -- there's actually a court trial now, which includes an accusation against Chevron that they have omitted information. They actually lied in the very beginning about the extension of the oil spill. So that's the kind of information that I'm talking about. The right of information in general, not just in journalism. So - but I personally never had any -- any problem.

Lican Liu: Well --

Greg Dalton: Lican Liu?

Lican Liu: Sure. In China, because we have three -- the giant oil companies, they are totally controlled by the government so you generally can report a small extent of spillover, those accidents from Chevron or in other foreign companies, but for these three companies in -- you will feel pressure from the government that they -- it's not easy for the media to cover those spillover accident from them. But still the Chinese media are struggling for, you know, to covering more station from these three companies. We criticize a lot those companies, it's not easy, it's a challenge.

Greg Dalton: We have to end it there. Our thanks to our guests today. Lican Liu is a Water Director at the Greenovation Hub in China, Michael Simire is Deputy Editor of the Sunday Independent in Nigeria, and Gustavo Faleiros is Environmental Journalist and Knight Fellow from Brazil and Imelda Abano is President of the Philippine Network of Environmental Journalists. I'm Greg Dalton, thank you for listening and coming to Climate One today.

[Applause]

[END]